

HISTORY OF USS REPOSE (AH-16)

A more modern Hospital than that found on board the USS REPOSE would be difficult to achieve. The latest innovations and equipment required for the treatment of the sick and injured have been incorporated into this fine ship. With her crew of 51 male officers, 29 nurses, 32 chief petty officers and 600 bluejackets, she can handle up to 750 patients with the comfort and efficiency of a modern metropolitan hospital.

USS REPOSE was built by the Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company at Chester, Pennsylvania under contract to the United States Maritime Commission. Her keel was laid on 22 October 1943. On 8 August 1944, she was launched as SS MARINE BEAVER, but she was delivered to the Navy prior to completion for conversion to a hospital ship. She was commissioned USS REPOSE on 26 May 1945. Her sponsor was Mrs. Pauline McIntire, wife of Vice Admiral Ross T. McIntire, Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery and President Roosevelt's personal physician.

After extensive preparation, she sailed to Cristobal, Canal Zone, entering the Pacific Ocean on 14 July 1945 as an active unit of the Pacific Fleet. On 16 September she stood out from Buckner Bay, Okinawa to ride out a typhoon of such intensity that it sheared off fire plugs on her main deck and bared the metal beneath her paint. It took her crew only a week to repair this damage and she then set course for her next duty station, Shanghai, China. There, as a unit of the Pacific Fleet's Service Squadron 10, she remained from 30 September 1945 until 15 October 1946, with the exception of a week at Tsingtao, China.

After the completion of routine repairs and modernization at San Francisco, REPOSE returned to Tsingtao, China, joining USS BENEVOLENCE (AH-13). Between 1 March 1947 and 29 April 1949, only a two-week availability at Yokosuka, Japan for repairs and nine days in Shanghai, interrupted two years of continuous service at this North China Station.

In April 1949, REPOSE received casualties from HMS LONDON, HMS BLACK SWAN, and HMS ANETHYST, victims of attacks by the Communist Chinese. A plaque commemorating this support was donated to the REPOSE wardroom by HMS LONDON. On 29 April, with 77 British casualties and 118 American evacuees from Shanghai, REPOSE sailed for Hong Kong. After several calls at Chinese, Japanese, Okinawan, and Philippine ports, REPOSE sailed from Subic Bay on 5 July arriving at Long Beach on 27 July 1949.

REPOSE was operated under a civilian crew by the Military Sea Transportation service from 3 September 1949 until 26 August 1950, when she once again resumed her Navy role with a new Navy crew sailing her from Yokosuka, Japan to Pusan, Korea. She returned to Japan on 27 October 1950 with 189 United Nations casualties on board. At 1112 on 28 October 1950, USS REPOSE was officially returned to commissioned service.

REPOSE arrived at Inchon on 13 November 1950, then to Chinnampo on 19 November, returning to Inchon on 1 December with 752 casualties from Pyongyang. She supported U.S. and U.K. Forces during the destruction of the port of Inchon and the burning of the city by North Korean Forces in early January. Her next mission was in Pohang Dong, to support the First Marine Division. 18 February 1951 found her back in Pusan to evacuate 741 U.S. Army casualties to Kobe, Japan. Joined by sister ship USS HAVEN (AH-12), REPOSE celebrated her first year of Korean Service by throwing a party for 500 orphans at Pusan's "Happy Mountain Orphanage".

On 22 January 1952, REPOSE sailed homeward for renovation, repair, and installation of a helicopter landing platform that would greatly facilitate direct evacuation of casualties from the field to the hospital. She returned once again to the Orient, arriving in Inchon on 24 June. This time REPOSE was to share her workload with the Danish hospital ship JUTLANDIA and USS CONSOLATION (AH-15).

On 10 June 1953, USS REPOSE was awarded the Korean Presidential Unit Citation by Admiral K. E. Murphy, Commander Service Squadron Three. REPOSE remained in Korean waters until 15 January 1954 with only a few brief diversions to evacuate patients and a short respite in Hong Kong. She arrived home on 11 February, served briefly as a pierside hospital on the west coast, and was decommissioned on 21 December 1954 at Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard.

After ten and one-half years with the reserve fleet at Suisun Bay, California, REPOSE was once again called to active duty. She returned to commissioned service in the U. S. Navy at 1400 on the sixteenth of October 1965, 151 days after call-up. She departed Hunter's Point on 3 January and, after refresher training and upkeep in Pearl Harbor and Subic Bay, she arrived in Chu Lai, Republic of Vietnam on 14 February 1966.

Vietnam marked the innovation of a new concept of mobile hospital support. In this war, REPOSE has stationed herself near sites of heaviest actions and has taken virtually all casualties aboard by helo. She is usually underway and seldom departs the combat zone. Her area of responsibility is the I Corps Tactical Zone from Danang to the DMZ (17 N). On the 30th of January 1967, she performed the 3000th consecutive successful helicopter landing. 29 March marked the 2000th surgical operation in Vietnam.

USS SANCTUARY (AH-17) arrived in April 1967 to share the ever-increasing workload.

On 14 May, REPOSE admitted a record 98 patients in a single day. REPOSE was called from Danang Harbor on 29 July to give emergency assistance to the USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) when the latter suffered a major fire while on YANKEE station in the Gulf of Tonkin. REPOSE cared for 30 casualties from this tragic event.

On 19 August 1967, in ceremonies held while on station in Vietnamese waters, REPOSE was presented the Navy Unit Commendation by Rear Admiral H. G. WARD, Commander Service Group THREE, for exceptional service from 22 February 1966 to 8 February 1967.

On 29 August 1967, REPOSE set yet another high by admitting 112 patients in one day. In mid-November REPOSE made her last liberty port visit to Hong Kong; ever-increasing demands for her services made it difficult to gain release for even short upkeep periods. Patient admissions, helicopter landings, and medical treatment in general continued to reach new highs. The increased tempo of operations is reflected by these statistics: the 5,000th helo landing in early December, the 6,000th on 30 April 1968, and the 7,000th on 22 June. She achieved a new high for patient admissions in a single week, admitting 400 between 26 May and 1 June, and established a new monthly high of 953 (of whom 630 were wounded in action), also in May. The number of surgical operations performed in Vietnamese waters reached 5,000 on 2 August 1968.

REPOSE marked her 9,000th safe helo landing on 14 November 1968. In spite of the strenuous on the line commitments of 81 days per quarter, a high order of efficiency, service and morale has been achieved. By 1 October 1968 13,712 patients had been admitted and over 18,000 patients had been treated on an outpatient basis.